DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 452 936 JC 010 385

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TITLE	The Impact of College Hour upon Class Enrollments. Research Report.
INSTITUTION	Piedmont Virginia Community Coll., Charlottesville, VA. Office of Institutional Research and Planning.
REPORT NO	PVCC-RR-1-2001
PUB DATE	2001-02-00
NOTE	12p.
PUB TYPE	Numerical/Quantitative Data (110) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Achievement; Attendance; Community Colleges; Enrollment; *Enrollment Influences; *Enrollment Management; *Enrollment Trends; Student Behavior; *Trend Analysis; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS	*Piedmont Virginia Community College

ABSTRACT

This study examines the possible effects of "College Hour" upon class enrollments at Piedmont Virginia Community College (PVCC) (Virginia). College Hour is a one-hour block of time on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, from 12:20 to 1:20 p.m., when no classes are taught. Instead, the time is dedicated to students' activities and faculty/staff committee meetings. During the four fall terms prior to instituting College Hour, the average number of MWF classes during the five class periods surrounding college hour was 63, and the average number of students enrolled was 1,491. In 1997 and the three fall terms following, the average number of classes offered was 52, and the average number of students enrolled was 1,271. After College Hour was instituted, the number of classes taught during these periods dropped by 11, or 17%, and enrollments fell by 220, or 15%. What happened to students displaced by College Hour? A convincing argument can be made that they simply took classes during corresponding hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Prior to College Hour, fewer students enrolled in TTh classes than in MWF classes; since College Hour was instituted, the trend has been reversed, and now, considerably more students enroll in TTh classes than in MWF classes. (JA)

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Research Report No. 1-2001
February 2001

Piedmont Virginia Community College
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Introduction

This study grew out of the concerns of one of the co-authors who noticed declining enrollments in the mid-morning accounting classes she taught on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Conventional college wisdom held that these class times were the prime times to attract students. However, when both co-authors reviewed data, they discovered that conventional wisdom did not hold true, and that the times of highest enrollment were on Tuesdays and Thursdays instead of Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. This led to an examination of the possible effects of College Hour upon class enrollments during the day.

A word or two of explanation is in order. College Hour is a one-hour block of time on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, from 12:20 p.m. to 1:20 p.m., when no classes are taught. Instead, the time is dedicated to student activities and faculty/staff committee meetings. College Hour was first instituted in the spring of 1997. Prior to that time, regular classes were taught during this one-hour block of time.

Results

The number of classes taught on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays (MWF), and student enrollment in these classes, is shown in Tables 1 and 2. Note that these data include only classes during the five class periods surrounding College Hour (9:05 a.m., 10:10 a.m., 11:15 a.m., 12:20 p.m., and 1:20 p.m.). Also, they do not include

classes taught only on Mondays and Wednesdays or only on Mondays, Wednesdays, or Fridays.

Table 1: Number of MWF Classes

Classes Starting ...	*1993*	*1994*	*1995*	*1996*	*1997*	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*
8:00 a.m.	5	3	3	2	4	2	3	3
9:05 a.m.	13	13	13	14	17	14	13	13
10:10 a.m.	17	15	14	14	14	14	14	12
11:15 a.m.	21	20	18	19	16	16	19	19
12:20 p.m.	15	16	14	12	0	0	0	0
1:20 p.m.	2	0	0	0	7	8	7	6
2:20 p.m.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3:20 p.m.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4:20 p.m.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
OTHER	3	10	6	6	8	2	6	3

Table 2: MWF Class Enrollments

Classes Starting ...	*1993*	*1994*	*1995*	*1996*	*1997*	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*
8:00 a.m.	105	85	95	49	108	64	102	90
9:05 a.m.	356	354	381	409	398	381	327	353
10:10 a.m.	419	408	369	399	396	379	345	334
11:15 a.m.	488	416	390	383	373	386	348	457
12:20 p.m.	328	306	269	278	0	0	0	0
1:20 p.m.	10	0	0	0	150	152	159	145
2:20 p.m.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3:20 p.m.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4:20 p.m.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
OTHER	63	151	78	113	52	80	104	78

During the four fall terms prior to instituting College Hour, the number of MWF classes ranged from a high of 68 to a low of 59, and student enrollments ranged from a high of 1,601 to a low of 1,409. The average number of classes offered during these times was 63, and the average number of students enrolled was 1,491. In 1997 and the three fall terms following, MWF class enrollments during the five class periods ranged from a high of 54 to a low of 50, and student enrollment ranged from a high of

1,317 to a low of 1,179. The average number of classes offered was 52, and the average number of students enrolled was 1,271.

In other words, after College Hour was instituted, the number of classes taught during these periods dropped by 11, or 17%, and enrollments fell by 220, or 15%. If one rationale in instituting College Hours was that students would take 1:20 p.m. instead of 12:20 p.m. classes, this simply has not been true. The average number of classes taught at 1:20 since College Hour was instituted, has been 7 and the average enrollment has been 152. In contrast, prior to College Hour, twice as many classes were taught at 12:20 (14) and twice as many students were enrolled (295).

What happened to students displaced by College Hour? A convincing argument can be made that they simply took classes during corresponding hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays (TTh). The number of TTh classes, and student enrollment in these classes, is shown in Tables 3 and 4. Note that these data include only classes during the four class periods corresponding to those on MWF surrounding College Hour (9:35 a.m., 11:10 a.m., 12:45 a.m., and 2:20 p.m.). Also, they do not include classes taught only on Tuesdays or only on Thursdays.

Table 3: Number of TTh Classes

Classes Starting ...	*1993*	*1994*	*1995*	*1996*	*1997*	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*
8:00 a.m.	9	11	8	9	11	11	6	4
9:35 a.m.	19	15	13	16	17	13	15	17
11:10 a.m.	28	24	24	25	22	26	26	27
12:45 p.m.	20	24	22	22	24	23	25	24
2:20 p.m.	0	0	1	1	2	7	7	8
5:30 p.m.	13	11	9	12	16	19	23	20
7:00 p.m.	6	6	4	4	3	3	2	4
OTHER TIMES	23	28	30	32	37	34	36	32

Table 4: TTh Class Enrollments

Classes Starting ...	*1993*	*1994*	*1995*	*1996*	*1997*	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*
8:00 a.m.	235	235	184	206	231	238	127	95
9:35 a.m.	433	351	321	364	314	307	327	457
11:10 a.m.	544	507	484	532	506	544	573	602
12:45 p.m.	418	456	399	427	451	437	559	560
2:20 p.m.	0	0	23	22	22	135	104	137
5:30 p.m.	185	95	131	149	179	195	316	238
7:00 P.M.	96	94	37	44	46	66	45	71
OTHER TIMES	225	304	347	275	385	385	482	400

During the four fall terms prior to College Hour, the number of TTh classes ranged from a high of 67 to a low of 60, and student enrollments ranged from a high of 1,395 to a low of 1,227 (see Table 2). The average number of classes offered during these times was 64, and the average number of student enrolled was 1,320. In 1997 and the three fall terms following, TTh classes during these times ranged from a high of 76 to a low of 65, and student enrollment ranged from a high of 1,756 to a low of 1,293. The average number of classes offered during these times was 71, and the average number of students enrolled was 1,509.

In other words, the average number of TTh classes has increased by 7, or 11%, and the average number of class enrollments has risen by 189, or 14%. The 14% increase in TTh student enrollment since College Hour was instituted almost completely offsets the 15% loss in MWF student enrollment. This leads one to conclude that rather than simply switch from 12:20 to 1:20 classes on MWF, students instead switched to corresponding classes on TTh.

The shift from MWF to TTh is graphically shown in Figures 1 and 2 which show, respectively, the number of classes taught during these times and the number of student enrollments during these classes.

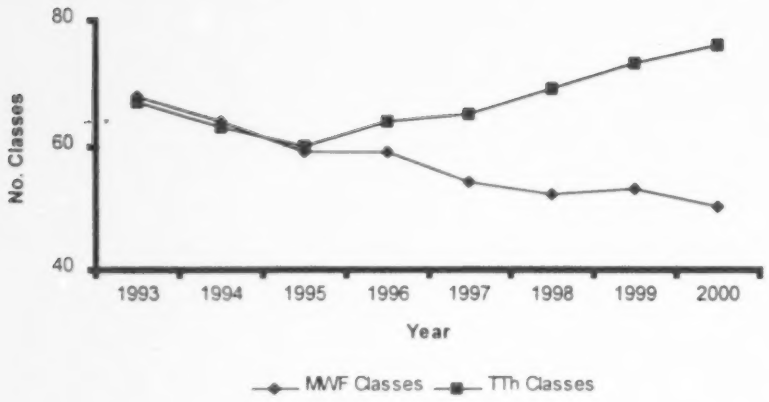

Figure 1: Classes Taught on MWF and TTh

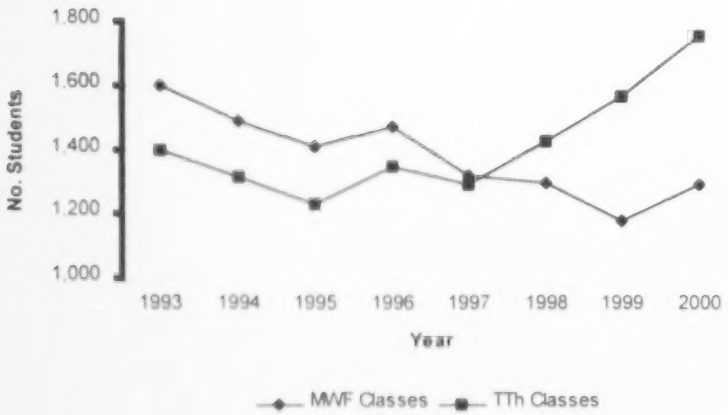

Figure 2: MWF and TTh Class Enrollments

As can be seen in the first figure, prior to instituting College Hour, approximately the same number of classes were taught on MWF as on TTh; since College Hour was instituted, more classes have been taught on TTh and fewer on MWF. As can be seen in Figure 2, the effect is even more dramatic when considering student enrollment. Prior to College Hour, fewer students enrolled in TTh classes than in

MWF classes; since College Hour was instituted, the trend has been reversed, and now, considerably more students enroll in TTh classes than in MWF classes. In other words, while it's not possible to prove that College Hour has caused the decline in MWF enrollment and the increase in TTH enrollment, the data certainly indicate that this might be a major contributing factor.

Conclusions

One implication of these findings is that adjusting College Hour could potentially result in an overall enrollment increase at PVCC. If TTh enrollments could be maintained, and if MWF enrollments could be restored to their pre-College Hour pattern, nearly 300 additional class enrollments would result. An additional 300 class enrollments could possibly result in 60 additional FTES per semester—an increase of 3%. In addition, the college might be able to offer classes in the late afternoon on MW. The 2:20 class time has been popular on TTh—perhaps that time would work as well on MW.

Perhaps a more fundamental question to ask is whether college hour has served the purpose for which it was intended? College officials had wanted a time to allow students to participate in the life of the college. While there were 457 students in the 11:15 MWF classes during Fall Semester 200, there were only 145 who took classes at 1:20. It would appear therefore that most students leave campus after their 11:15 classes, and this in turn, would suggest that students are not really using the college hour to participate in the life of the college. Also, if students have indeed shifted from

MWF to TTh classes as a result of College Hour, those students are not on campus during College Hour.

College Hour has been successful in creating times for faculty/staff committees to meet, but other times might be just as suitable as 12:20 p.m. Indeed, many faculty and staff would prefer to separate lunch hour from College Hour. It is beyond the scope of this study to offer a definitive solution to this issue, but several alternatives do suggest themselves.

One possible way to increase the MWF population is to move college hour to 1:20 or 2:30 p.m. Students would then be able to take as many as five courses during one trip to the college. A more radical proposal is to consider making the MWF schedule into a MW schedule, effectively copying the success of the TTh course offerings. Finally, college officials might examine course offering at other colleges. Have other community colleges found that students are shifting into two-day only classes? How is College Hour handled at these institutions?